

# NEWS TRAVELS

ARC Travel Services' News and Views



Volume 3, Summer 2006

## The Director's Corner

By Diana Bonnell

**H**ave you ever used a Contract Carrier or stayed in a FedRooms hotel? If you have, then you have benefited from one of the programs administered by the General Services

Administration (GSA). GSA is the agency that has oversight on many federal travel programs including the publication of the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR). The FTR governs temporary duty travel, relocation allowances, as well



as other topics such as non-federal source travel and reporting.

This summer GSA hosts the biannual National Travel Forum (NTF) where federal agencies and vendors have an opportunity to learn more about the fed-

eral travel program. The NTF provides workshops, plenary sessions, and vendor exhibits resulting in a full range of travel and relocation-related topics, current issues, and future trends to assist federal managers and others in performing their jobs more effectively. This is the largest federal community travel event available. If your agency participates, they will have many opportunities to keep abreast of innovation and change, to learn specifics from

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*ARC Travel Services would like to welcome Office of the Comptroller of the Currency and The Bureau of Engraving and Printing to our growing list of satisfied customers*

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the many experts and exhibitors, and to network with other people in the federal travel arena.

Federal Travel is a complex and ever-evolving program. ARC

Travel Services works very closely with the General Services Administration to ensure that we offer the most current, compliant, and innovative travel service possible. GSA is the Program Management Office for the E-Gov Travel initiative and facili-

tates E-Gov Travel work groups of which ARC is an active participant. Representatives from ARC Travel Services Temporary Duty Travel and Relocation Travel will take part in the National Travel Forum this summer and we hope to see many of you there. *[Signature]*

## The FedRooms Rate and the “Government” Rate are Not the Same

**F**edRooms is the official government-wide, government-approved lodging program created to make federal travel easier. Rooms at the FedRooms Rate can be found at leading hotels, and meet all per diem and FEMA

requirements. Plus, the program ensures protection from hidden fees frequently attached to unmanaged rates. But travelers have to ask for the FedRooms Rate by name—the hotel’s “government” rate doesn’t give the same guarantees.

Travelers can book online, through their TMCs, at [fedrooms.com](http://fedrooms.com) or by calling the hotel directly, and ask for the FedRooms Rate. A rate by any other name is simply not the same. The FedRooms Rate. Ask for it by name. [www.fedrooms.gov](http://www.fedrooms.gov). *[Signature]*

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**The FedRooms Rate.**  
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## Estimating Car Rental Total Cost

**H**aving trouble estimating car rental cost on your authorization? It is important to ensure that you are obtaining the true government rates as set forth in the U.S. Government Rental Car Agreement implemented by the Surface Deployment and Distribution Command (SDDC), which includes superior rates when renting for official business. The agreement has many benefits other than rates, such as unlimited mileage, reduced age restriction, and collision damage waiver insurance. These rates are not subject to blackout dates, do not require advance reservations, or even a minimal rental period. Rates and drop charges for one-way rentals in the Continental US and rates for international locations are also set forth in the agreement. The car rental company has the option of charging mileage costs for one-way rentals.

But beware! There are companies that do not participate in the

SDDC agreement advertising "Government" rates at what appears to be a reasonable rate. These inviting rates, however, do not include insurance, unlimited mileage, or guarantee a newer vehicle. These non-participating companies have never signed an agreement with SDDC, and do not have any ceiling rates on file with SDDC. If the traveler has an accident, it is not covered under the agreement, and the traveler is solely liable for the damage incurred to that vehicle. You can confirm your rental car is a participant by going to the list of approved car rental companies at [www.sddc.army.mil](http://www.sddc.army.mil).

Additionally, when you pick-up the rental, the invoice should include a standard mandatory government administrative rate supplement (GARS) of \$5.00 per day worldwide. GARS is paid by all government renters and will reimburse the rental car company for those costs incurred which are peculiar to doing business with the government, including the

application of the agreement terms and conditions on a world-wide basis, the rental of vehicles to employees under age 25, acceptance of properly licensed fellow government employees on official business as additional drivers, and a guarantee of the maximum rates for at least 60 days. Travelers should be aware that the \$5.00 fee is not included, but is in addition to, the daily rate. When arranging travel by rental car, please remember to add the \$5.00 fee per day to get the actual cost of the rental car. It will be included in the total cost of your vehicle, but should appear as a separate line item on your bill. Other charges that may be itemized on the rental contract are state and local government fees, surcharges and taxes that cannot be included in the rate, and are applied to all rentals at that location. Adding these charges along with the GARS to the Expenses section of your authorization will ensure a more accurate estimation of your total rental car cost. 

*On-Line Booking  
Year to Date 73%*

## Cash Advances for Relocation Expenses

### **Can I get a cash advance for permanent change of station (PCS) expenses?**

Yes, depending on your agency's policy and the type of expense you are incurring.

There are two types of cash advances available to Government employees: ATM advances available through use of the Government travel charge card and cash advances requested and processed through your relocation coordinator and deposited directly to your bank account.

Cash advances may be available for travel and transportation expenses in conjunction with enroute travel for the employee and family members depending on agency policy and procedure. Other discretionary allowances where an advance may be authorized and approved include house-hunting trips and temporary quarters.

Generally, cash advances processed by direct deposit are limited to 80% of the estimated amount authorized. The cash advance is intended to provide for most of the cash needs of the traveler while avoiding an overpayment that would require collection.

### **Can I use my Government travel charge card for ATM advances to use for relocation expenses?**

If you have a Government travel card and your agency allows it, use of ATM advances are generally acceptable for relocation expenses that can be vouchered quickly, such as househunting and enroute travel and transportation.




ATM advances are not appropriate for actual temporary quarters (TQ); but if your agency allows direct deposit cash advances, your relocation coordinator would be glad to initiate that process at your request.

Appropriate use of an ATM advance for relocation depends on agency policy and the type of allowance that the employee is considering. Please contact your relocation coordinator before using your travel Government card for permanent change of station expenses.

### **What problem might occur if I use my ATM card for a cash advance for temporary quarters?**

You may not be reimbursed before your charge card due date. The employee is responsible for paying their travel card charges timely regardless of whether they have been reimbursed.

If the employee is authorized actual TQ, the calculation for reimbursement is based on actual expenses incurred over an extended period of time, generally in 30-day increments. The reimbursement process for actual TQ cannot be initiated until each segment of TQ is completed. Direct deposit advances needed for temporary quarters should be requested and processed through your relocation coordinator.

Your relocation coordinator will be familiar with the policy and procedures of your agency. Please feel free to e-mail questions to us at [pcstravel@bpd.treas.gov](mailto:pcstravel@bpd.treas.gov) or call your relocation coordinator. 

## Year-end Guidance for Travelers

**E**ach year, ARC Travel Services provides year-end guidance to travelers in order to ensure a smooth transition from one fiscal year (FY) to the next. This article is a sneak preview of the guidance that will be sent globally as FY 2007

approaches. We have broken down the guidance this year by document type (authorizations, vouchers from authorizations, local vouchers) and miscellaneous information. We hope this will be helpful when creating documents for the new fiscal year and clear-

ing out any outstanding trips for FY 2006. As you review this guidance, please let us know if you would like to see additional information included in this document in the future.

## GovTrip Guidance for FY2007

### AUTHORIZATION GUIDANCE

#### **FY2006 TRAVEL – AUGUST 31 YEAR-END CUTOFF**

**Authorizations for travel to be performed before September 30, 2006 should be approved by August 31, 2006 in GovTrip.**

Travel that begins in FY 2006 that extends beyond September 30, 2006 will initially be prepared as one document (created by traveler/document preparer) in GovTrip due to the on-line booking of reservations. When the approved authorization is submitted for processing, ARC Travel Services will create an amendment to include expenses for the September portion of the trip and also an authorization for the October portion. ARC Travel Services will contact

the traveler/document preparer if further information is needed. Both of these documents will need to be re-routed for approval.

The October trip will remain in the created status until FY 2007 accounting is entered in GovTrip on September 11, 2006 (approximate date at this time). ARC Travel Services will add the FY 2007 accounting to the October authorization and route it through the normal routing.

**TRAVEL AUTHORIZATIONS FOR FY2007 - If possible, please do not enter electronic documents for travel occurring after September 30, 2006 until GovTrip is updated on September 11, 2006.**

Authorizations for travel occurring on or after October 1, 2006 require a FY 2007 accounting code. These accounting codes will be updated on September 11, 2006. For single year appropriations, the authorization should contain a comment (“Travel is contingent on availability of FY 2007 funds”) until appropriations are passed. The traveler is responsible for verifying that the funds are available prior to departure. The program office, agency budget contact, or ARC Travel help desk can tell the traveler whether funds are available.

Documents for travel after September 30 may be prepared and routed in GovTrip beginning September 11, 2006. If the travel authorization must be created prior to September 11, please call the ARC Travel help desk for assistance.

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## **VOUCHER GUIDANCE**

**FY06 Vouchers** – Please voucher timely to close out all FY 2006 vouchers since the 2006 accounting will be deleted from GovTrip on December 1. If you still have an open obligation on November 1, 2006, our office will send an e-mail to your agency's travel contact. They will be responsible for contacting you and asking you to voucher before December 1.

**Vouchers Crossing Fiscal Year-** When returning from your trip, please keep in mind that you will need to create two vouchers, one from the September (FY06) authorization and one from the October (FY07) authorization.

## **LOCAL VOUCHER GUIDANCE**

When creating local vouchers in GovTrip, please create a document for each fiscal year's expenses. You cannot claim FY 2006 and FY 2007 expenses on the same document. Use caution when selecting the correct accounting.

## **MISCELLANEOUS FY 2007 TRAVEL INFORMATION**

Any unexpected or local travel needs for FY 2006 arising during the month of September should be entered and approved in GovTrip as soon as possible.

### **DEFAULT ACCOUNTING**

If you use the default accounting feature, please re-select the appropriate FY 2007 accounting in the traveler's GovTrip profile. Please be careful when selecting accounting after September 11, as FY 2006 and FY 2007 accounting will be in GovTrip until FY 2006 accounting is deleted on December 1, 2006.

### **CONTRACT FARES AND CONTINUING RESOLUTION**

Agencies cannot obligate funds for a new fiscal year until they are received. Until an agency receives funding for FY 2007, only Government contract fares can be reserved for trips beginning after October 1, 2006, or a trip beginning before this date but the return segment is


not until after October 1, 2006.

In the event of a continuing resolution (CR), travelers should only reserve Government contract fares. Contract fares are not issued until three days prior to departure. Therefore, if the Government is under a CR, the contract ticket can be cancelled without penalty. Acceptable contract fares are highlighted in yellow and green in GovTrip. These fares should be available early to mid-September. A notification will be sent out once the FY 2007 fares are available in GovTrip.

### **TAV FEES**

The amount of the TAV fees, which is charged at the time the voucher is approved, will be reduced on November 12, 2006 as follows:

|               |         |
|---------------|---------|
| TDY Voucher   | \$13.50 |
| Local Voucher | \$ 6.50 |

**Please call the ARC Travel help desk at 304-480-8000 (Option 1) if you have any questions or need assistance with any of this guidance.** 

## Northwest Airlines' Coach Choice Program

**R**ecently, Northwest airlines implemented a test with "Coach Choice" Paid Seat Assignments.

As regards to the City Pair contract fares, if a traveler chooses to reserve a premium seat for a fee, the traveler will be subject to the fee. We want to reassure our customers, however, that the fee will not be charged if the premium seat is the last seat available for booking.

Northwest's policy is that the last seat be provided at no additional cost to any passenger regardless of fare type. The General Services Administration has determined that the choice to pay extra for an aisle seat is personal to the employee and is not a requirement of the Government; accordingly, this is an expense that is borne by the employee and is not reimbursable.

We take this opportunity to emphasize the importance of making reservations early in order for the best seat selection possible. We also remind customers that, while the booking of the contract fare (YCA) is guaranteed as long as economy class is available, choice in seat selection is not guaranteed. Seat assignments are under the con-

trol of the carriers. Therefore, we encourage all travelers to select seat assignments at the time of reservation and to arrive early for check-in at the airport. Travelers run the risk of losing pre-reserved seats with late check-in times as seat assignments may be released close to departure time and given to other passengers. In addition, at




times, seat assignments may change in situations such as a change of equipment or the need to accommodate a family, group, or disabled person.

Below is a summary of Northwest's new seat assignment procedure applicable to domestic flights only:

- Very limited number of seats will be held back for "Coach Choice" upgrade - only 5% of coach seats. These seats will be comprised of seats having extra leg room such as aisle, exit rows, and bulkhead seats.
- Any passenger can "upgrade" and purchase "Coach Choice"

seats regardless of fare type or fare basis code including GSA contract fares and all government/military fare types. **The fees for the "Coach Choice" seats are not reimbursable by the Government.**

- Travelers cannot access these seats at time of booking.
- These premium seats can only be purchased via Northwest's website or airport kiosk.
- Payment is by credit card only.
- These seats can only be purchased a maximum of 24 hours prior to flight - or 36 hours for Northwest Elite members.
- First come, first served.
- Any of these premium hold out seats not utilized ("sold") one hour or less prior to flight departure will be released for normal seat allocation. 


## What's New In Relocation Services Branch

*By Beth Wright*

### *New Version Release of moveLINQ 3.0*

**W**e are expecting the next release of moveLINQ in early October. This version of the software will contain the functional-

ity to support DOD policies for active employees subject to DOD regulations. The new uniformed services component of the system will depict all the key

requirements necessary to support our Commissioned Corps customers. We plan to begin testing the software upon its arrival and installation. 



Heard on a Southwest Airlines flight. "Ladies and gentlemen, if you wish to smoke, the smoking section on this airplane is on the wing, and if you can light 'em, you can smoke 'em."

